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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

O God, in this quiet moment, may a holy hush come over us, giving us a sense of our dependence on You. May our Senators not trust too much in their abilities to solve problems and meet challenges but continue to seek the eternal and transcendent resources You offer to people of faith.

Lord, give our lawmakers humble and contrite hearts, that they may be channels of light and truth. Uphold them with Your everlasting and uplifting arms. May they persevere with integrity so that they may be presented holy and unblameable in Your sight. Keep our Senators calm and filled with faith in spite of all they must face.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ROUNDS). The majority leader is recognized.

TRIBUTE TO DR. JAMES BILLINGTON

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, we have recently learned that Dr. James Billington, the Librarian of Congress, who has been with us for almost 30 years, will be retiring in January. He

plans to spend more time with his wife of nearly 58 years, Marjorie. He wants to see more of his 4 children and 12 grandchildren. I am sure he would also like to catch up with his buddy who plays for the Grateful Dead or maybe just sit back with a box or two of the Mallomars he loves so much.

But I don't think Dr. Billington is ready to take his scholar's cap off quite yet, because he is preparing to do a little writing, too, about folks who played an important role in the history of—what else—the Library that means so much to him.

Dr. Billington has called the Library of Congress the “greatest collection of knowledge and copyrighted creativity in human history,” and I know how proud he is of the many initiatives he has undertaken to expand its reach and its relevance.

I noted yesterday that we are unlikely to come across many guys who can say they have been a Princeton valedictorian, a Harvard professor, an expert on the Kremlin, a veteran, and a Rhodes Scholar. But that is our Librarian of Congress.

He speaks 7 languages, he has 42 honorary doctorates, and I am hoping he will soon be able to start catching a full 8 hours of sleep every night.

Dr. Billington has certainly earned it, and we wish him the very best in his retirement.

CYBER SECURITY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on a different matter, I think a lot of people were shocked to hear that the Obama administration was unable to prevent the information of 4 million Americans from being compromised by hackers.

Officials in the White House now owe it to every American to let Congress help them get out of the past and up to speed with the cyber security realities of the 21st century. That is just what the measure we will soon consider would help do.

It contains modern tools that cyber security experts tell us could help deter future attacks against both the public and the private sectors. The measure would also help get the word out faster about attacks as soon as they are detected, provide governments and businesses with knowledge they can use to erect stronger defenses, and help strike a critical balance between security and privacy in the process. The bill would do so, for instance, by mandating the creation of guidelines to limit the use, retention, and diffusion of consumers' personal information.

This is more than just a smart measure. It is a transparent one too. It has been carefully scrutinized by Senators from both parties. It has been endorsed overwhelmingly on a bipartisan basis by nearly every single Democrat and every single Republican on the Intelligence Committee, and it has been posted online and available for anyone to read for quite some time.

The need for this smart, bipartisan, transparent measure couldn't be clearer. We shouldn't wait for the administration to fumble away another 4 million Social Security numbers or personal addresses before we help them get modernized and up to speed.

That hasn't stopped some Democratic leaders from thinking they should try to score some political points by taking down a bipartisan measure to combat cyber attacks.

I hope they won't do that.

Most Americans would find it awfully cynical for Democratic leaders, in the wake of the administration's inability to stop such a massive cyber attack, to vote against the very same cyber security legislation their own party vetted and overwhelmingly endorsed in committee for the sake of scoring some kind of political point.

We have a smart, transparent, bipartisan, fully vetted measure before us that can help make our country safer.

● This “bullet” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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